

ROMANIA
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, RESEARCH, YOUTH AND SPORTS
„1 DECEMBRIE 1918” UNIVERSITY IN ALBA IULIA
THE FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOLOGY

**MILESTONES IN THE STUDY OF FOLKLORE
IN MARAMURES**

SUMMARY

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2010

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INTRODUCTION

The Maramures county is a millenary Romanian region, which has kept even to this day an intact artistical thesaurus. Throughout history, the Romanians in Maramures have managed to develop and conserve a true political, social, economic and cultural life, which has had a strong influence over the Romanian regions, too.

The historical Maramures region must also be regarded in a wide national and European context, as it is situated at the confluence and interference of the great western and eastern European cultures and civilizations. They are interdependent and have given birth to a phenomenon of cultural syncretism which has resulted in this cultural area – Maramures, which has maintained itself in the centre of Europe to this day.

The spiritual life of the Maramures people has always been rich. The year 1391 is of reference for the history of the Romanian culture, as the first text written in Romanian, the Codex of Ieud, dates back then. In the same year 1391, the Peri Monastery, founded by Balc the voivode and Drag Mester, became directly dependent on the patriarchate, under the protection of Constantinopol. Inside the monastery, the monks contributed through their activity to the translation and duplication of religious books, which have been spread around the entire Romanian territory. A lot of priests wrote in Romanian during a period in which the official and religious languages were foreign, recording important events, poems and other traditional creations, which certify the spiritual richness of the inhabitants.

The overwhelming majority of the villages in Maramures has always been Romanian, their inhabitants having the status of free people, to which has been added the rank of average noblemen, as it is inferred in the paper *The Maramures Diplomas* written by the academician Ioan Mihalyi de Apsa.

It is in Maramures that the traditional creation has been preserved better than in any other region under all its forms, and, as we can see and hear, we've come to realize that there is authentic literary, musical and choreographic folklore, via which people express their thoughts and aspirations originally. The traditional village is changing and few things remind us of what the wood civilization used to mean for Maramures. Still, the folklore is created by the locals and those who work abroad and also the Romanians on the Tisa's right bank. A big part of the old literary folklore has been preserved even if the rituals have lost their sacral character and have lost touch with what they used to be in the beginning by breaking some of the symbolistic links. Innovation stands out more in themes and motifs, form and lexic.

The studies connected to the Maramures folklore have emphasized, not only for us, who were born in this region, but also for those who visit us and do research in the area, the richness of the traditional creations, customs and traditions, the mythology, marked by the depth of the history, the connection between the Romanian language and culture. It's interesting to notice that in Maramures the traditional creation has been preserved better than in other regions under all its forms. There is literary, musical, choreographic authentic folklore via which people express their thoughts and aspirations originally. The region remains a neverending source of authentic creation, which emphasizes the love for the beautiful expressed by the inhabitants.

The present paper wants to bring the folklore research up to date, thus continuing the investigation made by professor Dumitru Pop from Cluj. What is new is the critical reevaluation, from the perspective of the modernity of the published papers, by establishing the reference marks of the folklore in Maramures, putting into circulation some older and less known texts, and also the research into the institutionalized activity regarding the traditional creation (the Maramures County Centre of the Traditional Creation, the Maramures Museum in Sighet, the North University in Baia Mare).

The study „Landmarks of the Folklore in Maramures” refers to the historical Maramures region, addressing also to the other regions belonging to the Maramures county. It's difficult to define the personality of such a complex ethnographical and folkloric region as Maramures. This is why our research is based on the study of reference papers connected to folklore and its interpretation, not only from the beginnings of the folkloric research but also from the present period.

For its elaboration, the following documents have been consulted: 1. „The General Bibliography of Folklore” at „Lucian Blaga” Central University Library in Cluj-Napoca; 2. The Folklore Archives of the Academy, Cluj-Napoca; 3. The State Archives in Baia Mare; 4. „Petre Dulfu” Library in Baia Mare; 5. „Mihai Eminescu” Central University Library in Iasi; 6. The Folklore Archives in Iasi; 7. The archives of the Maramures Museum in Sighet (the collection of the paper „Graiul Maramuresului”, manuscripts belonging to Gheorghe Dancus and Petre Lenghel Izanu); 8. The folklore collections in the manuscript, in the mentioned institutions and in private collections.

Approved folklorists, researchers and collectors have been consulted: university professor doctor Ion Cuceu, university professor doctor Iordan Datcu, university professor doctor Mihai Dancus, university professor doctor Constantin Cornita, professor Pamfil Biltiu, professor Ion Vancea, professor Parasca Fat, doctor Mihai Botos from Apsa and last but not least, the scientific coordinator, university professor doctor Mircea Popa.

Customs and traditions happening in the Maramures villages during the period 2005-2009 have been recorded: the sheepfold, the wedding, the Sunday dance (at the barn), the caroling, New Year's Eve customs. A lot of old photos, forming a personal collection, documents, especially notebooks where customs, faiths, superstitions, lyrical creations from the Maramures villages and a valuable game collection for children about to be published at a publishing house in Sighet, have been gathered. The letters of the folklorist Ion Bârlea addressed to the priest in Berbesti belong to the personal collection.

The paper hereby is a trial to offer a reference point to the researchers of the area, Romanians and foreigners alike, as it reflects the constant preoccupations and interest for a region that maintains everything which means ethnical spirit, faith and value. It can be considered a means of information and knowledge of past and present research as far as the historical Maramures region is concerned.

The paper is structured in 7 chapters preceded by a bibliographic retrospective. Unlike other regions of Transylvania, Maramures started the research on its own traditional culture later, its beginnings being due to the learned men in other cultural centres in the country. The interest for the culture of Maramures started to locally materialize in the last decades of the 19th century. The attraction of the researchers towards the traditional heritage of Maramures in the first decades of the 20th century is due to the efforts of Ovid Densusianu, the activity of the Romanian Social Institute and the activity of the Folklore Institute. A few synthesis papers scientifically present the Maramures region: Dumitru Pop "The Folklore in Maramures", Mihai Dancus "Maramures - the Ethnographical Region" and after the year 2000 Constantin Cornita "The Maramures Region, the Ethnological Matrix and the Paradigms of the Maramures Folklore" and Dorin Stef "The History of the Maramures Folklore".

The first chapter "The First Attestations of the Interest for the Traditional Creation in Maramures" presents notes on manuscripts and old books, starting with those catalogued by Ioan Mihalyi de Apsa, then "The Petrovay Codex" which Dumitru Pop considers the oldest literary document, reproduced by Nicolae Petrovay "n Petrova die 18 Mensis Octobris 1672". The notes and documents published by folklorist Ion Barlea in the paper „Notes from the Churches in Maramures” or those emphasized by Aurel Socolan in the paper „The Circulation of Romanian Books until 1850 in the Maramures county” are also valuable. Private collections keep manuscripts such as the so-called "Verse Books", which are rather numerous in Transylvania. The most representative one is the one drawn up in Moisei between 1799-1824 by priest Koman Ioan, which is part of Mihai Dancus's collection.

The second chapter speaks about „The Effects of the Scientific Direction Envisaged by B.P. Hasdeu, starting in 1966 when the "Literaria Association" came into being, which in no

time became the “Romanian Academy”. Right after its setting up, a lot of folklore collections all over the country were published, gathered under the title “From the life of the Romanian people”, initiated by Ion Bianu. Stimulated by some European examples, Hasdeu formulates and distributes two questionnaires. The answers of the vicar Tit Bud in Sat Sugatag and other village learned men were recorded.

The cultural associations in Maramures have an important role, the most important one being the “Association for the Culture of the Romanian People in Maramures”, with an important role for the beginnings of the folklore movement. In order to give a greater impulse to the cultural movement and the national life, in 1867 the “Association of Reading for the Romanians in Maramures” named „Dragosiana” was set up, having a remarkable merit in collecting and valorizing the folklore in Maramures. What is remarkable is the excitement of the activities concerning folklore collections – Ioan Busitia, Simion Botizan, Ion Artemie Anderco, Laurentiu Mihaly, Teodor Mihnea, Sie or Sioanul, Alexandru Tiplea, Tit Bud and others.

The beginning of the folkloric activity in the north of Transylvania is connected to the newspaper “Gutitul” published in Baia Mare in 1889, being considered “the real literary beginning of the region” by the historian and literary critic Mircea Popa. During its short existence, the newspaper “Gutitul” published a number of 25 traditional productions from Maramures.

Among those interested in preserving the local folklore, there are mostly priests and primary school teachers who published folkloric creations collected by themselves in the magazines of those times, published in the first enclosure of the paper “The Folklore in Maramures” by Dumitru Pop. Until the end of the 19th century, over 250 Maramures traditional creations were published but, as Dumitru Pop sustained, they didn’t offer a clear overview of the traditional creation in the region, in spite of their impressive number.

The chapter “The Protagonists” presents the cultural climate which supported the publication of the important folklore collections in Maramures, this period being considered „the period of the classical collections of the poetical and musical creation of this region”. In 1906 the volume “Traditional Poems from Maramures” by Alexandru Tiplea, the first folklore volume in the region, from the collection “From the life of the Romanian people”, came into being at the Romanian Academy. Two years later, in the same collection of the Academy, was published the volume “Traditional Poems from Maramures” by Tit Bud. In the same period, the priest Ion Barlea collected rich materials of traditional poetry which he published at the end of the First World War under the title of “Popular Songs from Maramures. Magic charms, spells and breaking spells collected by priest Ion Barlea” published in Bucharest in 1924.

Chapter four presents the contribution of Ovid Densusianu to the history of our culture, to the development and improvement of folkloric collections and studies. The interest in folklore constituted a permanent activity for the Densusianu family. Very well-known are the traditional poems collected and the folkloric studies, and also the questionnaires to which Petru Biltiu Dancus in 1893 and Tit Bud in 1895 answered.

Among the followers of Ovid Densusianu, there is Tache Papahagi who opened the modern period of the folkloric research in Maramures. The most important achievement of the 1925-1945 period and one of the most important for the folklore of Maramures is the publication of the paper "The Language and the Folklore of Maramures", (1925), which asserted itself through the richness and variety of the material, and also through the strict scientific method which guided the author while collecting and publishing the texts.

The most devoted follower of Tache Papahagi is Gheorghe Dancus, originary from Ieud. In 1927, he presents the paper "The Folklore and the Language of the village Ieud", as his degree paper. This paper was awarded the first prize in his academic year and proposed for publication. The paper can be found in manuscript in Mihai Dancus's collection. After he was appointed teacher in Sighetu Marmatiei, together with a group of intellectuals, makes the publication of the newspaper "The Voice of Maramures" in 1932 a possibility. The collected material was supposed to serve as a basis for the setting up of a "Monography of Maramures", but unfortunately it didn't come into being after all.

Another folklorist from Maramures influenced by Tache Papahagi is Petre Lenghel Izanu. In 1938, he published „Christmas Customs and Carols from Maramures”, at the „Association for the Culture of the Romanian People in Maramures” Publishing House. In its foreword, he presents part of his notes on the folklore. Published posthumously, the volume „Daina mandra pin Barsana” (Barsana-monographic sketch) is a synthesis about the monography of the village Barsana, made up initially after the model of the Sociological School of D. Gusti.

The fifth chapter presents the essential role the "eminent folklorist and folklore researcher Ion Muslea" had, as the university professor doctor Mircea Popa sustained. The archives came into being in the spring of 1930. The main objective of the Archives or its "most important call" was the organization of some systematic collections all over the country. Then it came the classification and systematization based on scientific criteria of the collected material, into records. The most important achievement of the Folklore Archives was the publication of the "Annual", which replaced the old academic publication "From the life of the Romanian People". "The Folklore Annual" was welcome by the critics inside and outside the country.

The call put forward by Ion Mouslea on the occasion of the setting up of the Folklore Archives of the Academy, had a strong echo among the learned men in the villages of the region

on our side of Gutin Mountain. The nine Maramures correspondents of the Archives also mentioned by Dumitru Pop in „The Folklore of Maramures” represent eight villages in Maramures, which had less attention paid by the collectors, such as: Barsana, Breb, Desesti, Harnicesti, Rona de Sus, Sapanta, Sieu and Vad. The manuscript notebooks with the materials collected by the correspondents in Maramures who answered Muslea’s questionnaire, were published in the „Corpus of the Folklore in Maramures”.

The sixth chapter comprises “Significant Moments in the Post-War Period”. Starting with 1950, the history of folklore records important events especially for Maramures. It is a busy period in which the interest in ethnography and folklore starts to expand. Important folklore volumes are republished, such as those of Ion Barlea (1966) and Tache Papahagi (1981), valuable collections as results of the research done by both the folklorists in Maramures and those in the country (Al.I.Amzulescu¹ A. Fochi² si Ovidiu Bârlea³) or abroad (Joel Marrant, professor of cultural anthropology the USA, Jean Cuisenier, one of the great names of French and European ethnologies in the contemporary period, Claude Karnoouh, Gail Kligman – American sociologist or the Japanese Miya Kosei); a great interest is given to the material culture (Boris Zderciuc, “Les tapis du Maramures. Roumanie”, Tancred Banateanu, “The Traditional Costumes in Maramures and The Traditional Art in the north of Transylvania”, I. D. Stefanescu, “The Old Art of Maramures”) and to the musical folklore; folkloric monographies come into being, field research, festivals and scientific communication seminars are organized; the research of folklore is institutionalized.

All these actions are mostly due to the generous professor Mihai Pop from Bucharest who supported all the manifestations which had as goal the promotion of Maramures image as a devoted keeper of the traditional spirituality, both in the country and abroad.

The local interest in the preservation of the folklore in Maramures is materialized through the setting up of the Regional Centre of the Traditional Creation in Baia Mare, built up over 50 years ago. Since 1967, the activity of the Creation Centre has been extremely lively. Collections of materials, a series of festivals were organized comprising all ethnofolkloric regions in the Maramures county, specific to every season or holiday.

Among the actions started in this period, the largest and most important is the ‘Winter Festival in Sighetu Marmatiei’ (1969) coordinated by the manager of the Maramures Museum, professor doctor Mihai Dancus. Since 1970, there have been scientific and folkloric seminars led by Mihai Pop, where Romanian and foreign specialists participated. Within the 41 seminars organized so far, specialists in the county, country or abroad presented over 300 essays and

¹ Alexandru Amzulescu, *Balade populare românești*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1964

² Alexandru Fochi, *Miorita, Tipologie, circulație, geneza, texte*, București, EARPR, 1964

³ Ovidiu Bârlea, *Antologie de proza populară epică*, I-III, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1966

reports regarding winter customs, other folkloric materials, some collections never seen before, some personalities in the domains of ethnography and folklore.

A new generation of folklorists, many of them former students of professors Mihai Pop (Bucharest) and Dumitru Pop (Cluj) launched the idea of setting up an Association under the care of which field research to be performed and collections and specialized studies to be published. Professor Ion Chis Ster had an important role in the article named “The Folklore Archives of the County and Private Collections” in which he brings to discussion one of the objectives of the Association of Folklorists: the setting up of the Folklore Archives of Maramures, objective which was not accomplished. The most valuable accomplishment of the folklorist is the coordination of the paper “The Language, the Folklore and the Ethnography of the Chioar Region”, which he elaborated together with Gheorghe Pop, published in Baia Mare in 1983. The monography wants to be a retort to the work of Tache Papahagi in 1925 concerning the Maramures Country.

Various magazines were published during this period, the most valuable is “The Calendar of Maramures”, (1980), a unique publication in the Romanian culture, not only for its remarkable contents, but also for its original graphics. In 2006 the new series of the Calendar was published, subtitled “Magazine of Cultural Memories”.

In our contemporary folklore, Mihai Pop represents an important landmark. His activity bears multiple aspects, connected with the research of the traditional culture. Mihai Pop asserted himself as a teacher dedicated to his profession, teaching numerous generations of students. He also had great merits in capacity of manager of “The Institute of Ethnography and Folklore” between the years 1965-1975. He was also the manager of specialized periodical magazines, such as “The Folklore Magazine” (1956).

In order to provide a working instrument for those preoccupied by folklore, Mihai Pop published in 1967 “Guidebook for Folklore Collectors”, a work addressed not only to amateurs. To perform the field research he recommended the questionnaire method and the method of direct observation.

In 1976 he published two volumes: “Romanian Traditional Customs” and “Romanian Folklore” in collaboration with Pavel Ruxandoiu – a synthesis of the courses taught by the two professors at the Bucharest University. In 1984 he published the monography ‘Lapus – the Ethnographical region” written in collaboration with Georgeta Stoica and in 1998, Nicolae Constantin and Alexandru Dobre edited Mihai Pop’s work in two volumes, under the title “The Romanian Folklore – Theory and Method”, volume one and “The Romanian Folklore – Texts and Interpretations”, volume two, gathering tenths and hundreds of articles, reports, studies and communications of the great learned man.

Professor Dumitru Pop is the author of a priceless scientific work, made up of fundamental works of ethnology and folklore. The first published works comprise the folklore collections elaborated in Lapus, Chioar and Codru as a result of personal research and work with the students. Dumitru Pop published “Agrarian Customs in the Romanian Tradition”, in which he monographically presented the oldest and most representatives customs of the Romanian civilization, the antiquity of the agriculture practice of the Romanians: “Plugusorul”, “Paparuda”, “Caloianul” and “Dragaica”, “The problem of Interferences Between the Oral and Written Cultures”, “A Few Considerations Regarding the Romanian Folklore” and other studies meant to clarify some controverted issues in the Romanian folklore.

In conclusion, the present work wants to be an analitical presentation of the folklore research in the historical Maramures region, but also the description of the personalities who became landmarks in this domain. In a way, the research done by professor Dumitru Pop is continued, but a lot of exceptional materials were consulted to complete what the eminent professor had presented in the work „The Folklore of Maramures”, essential study of the history of folklore in Maramures.

Through our research we insist on the need of having a folklore archives, even in Sighet or Baia Mare, where the whole folkloric fund collected throughout the years should be gathered, researched and classified. Only in this way we can watch the evolution of folklore and the traditions meant to suffer from permanent social, economic and cultural changes.

We wanted to draw attention on the lack of some synthesis works about the creation of the Historical Maramures in the context of the national folklore. That is the reason why the work „Landmarks of the Maramures Folklore” tries to offer a competent opinion supported by productive though difficult research, about what has been written about the folklore in our region and a means of information for those interested in knowing the Historical Maramures.

We consider that the information comprised in this work and the materials in the enclosure will manage to convince the cultural and research institutions, the competent forums, of the necessity of keeping and preserving the patrimony. The folklore will continue to recreate, its spring won't dry up, but what is interesting is to foresee how the moral and aesthetical values will be reflected within the changes which may occur.

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